

Marines revise account of lethal IED blast

Retired general Meigs to lead anti-IED effort

BY JEFF SCHOGOL

Stars and Stripes

ARLINGTON, Va. — Retired four-star Army Gen. Montgomery Meigs will lead the U.S. effort against improvised explosive devices beginning Monday, according to the Defense Department.

Meigs, former commander of U.S. Army forces in Europe and of NATO's peacekeeping force in Bosnia, also will lead efforts to create a training center to combat IEDs at Fort Irwin, Calif., defense officials said.

In October 2003, the Defense Department expanded its effort to stop roadside bombs from a 12-member team to a full task force under Gen. Joseph Votel with more than \$1 billion to work with, according to the Defense Department.

But IEDs have continued to take their toll. Most recently, 10 Marines were killed and another 11 wounded by an IED on Thursday in Fallujah.

Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said Tuesday that Meigs has commanded at every level in the U.S. military, giving him the experience to integrate the training, tactics and procedures to thwart IEDs and to coordinate the anti-IED effort across government agencies.

"Gen. Meigs has an operational background that cannot be matched," Whitman said.

Also, since Meigs is retired, he can devote all his time to efforts to defeat IEDs, Whitman said.

About 39 percent, or 821 troops, of the roughly 2,100 U.S. fatalities in Iraq report-



Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Gen. Montgomery Meigs talks with the troops in Illesheim, Germany, in April 1999.

ed as of Nov. 26 were killed by an "explosive device," Defense Department statistics show. Explosive devices such as IEDs are also responsible for about 50 percent of U.S. hostile deaths in Iraq up to Nov. 26.

Another 65 U.S. troops, about 3 percent of U.S. fatalities, were killed by bombs, which can also be classified as IEDs, the statistics show.

Also as of Nov. 26, explosive devices such as IEDs counted for 8,452 of U.S. troops wounded in Iraq, about 53 percent of the total number of hostile wounds in action, the statistics show. Another 572 troops, about 3.6 percent of U.S. troops wounded in action, were the victims of bombs, the statistics show.

Officials have said the insurgents have changed their techniques over the last

year, using more explosives and shaped charges to channel blasts and penetrate armor.

In an e-mail to Stripes on Tuesday, a soldier who had been stationed in northern Iraq said that originally insurgents had used gasoline bombs designed to deflate the tires on Strykers. But as U.S. forces brought in heavier vehicles, insurgents started using three or more 122 mm shells in their bombs that blow up from both sides of the road.

Whitman said the Defense Department is waging a "very aggressive" campaign against IEDs and the department will commit whatever additional resources it needs to overcome the IED problem.

"This is one program that will be not be underfunded," he said.

E-mail Jeff Schogol at: schogolj@stripes.osd.mil

10 dead were in combat outpost

BY JOSEPH GIORDONO

Stars and Stripes

The 10 Marines killed in an explosion near Fallujah were inside a makeshift combat outpost at the time of the attack and not on a foot patrol as originally reported, U.S. military officials confirmed Tuesday.

According to the new details, the Marines were finishing up a promotion ceremony in the patrol base when the blast occurred.

"It is suspected that one of the Marines triggered a hidden pressure plate initiation device, causing the explosion," according to a Marine Corps news release. "Explosive experts believe four artillery shells were buried in two separate locations."

Eleven other Marines were wounded in the Thursday's incident; seven of those Marines returned to duty shortly after the attack.

The unit had taken over an abandoned flour factory near Fallujah and had been using it as a makeshift base, officials said.

"The platoon swept the area for explosives and established security around the factory," the Marine release said.

On the day of the attack, their company commander had traveled to the factory to promote three Marines in the field. As the ceremony finished, the assembled Marines were dismissed and milling about. It was then that the device was triggered, officials said.

All of the Marines were in full combat gear — including body armor — at the time of the incident.

The Marines were from Company F, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment from Twentynine Palms, Calif. At least 75 Marines stationed at Twentynine Palms have been killed since the 2003 invasion, according to Pentagon records.

First reports by the military said the Marines had been on a foot patrol at the time of the attack. In the ensuing days, a militant group calling itself the Islamic Army of Iraq posted a video on the Internet, claiming it was a recording of the attack. That video showed a massive explosion hitting a group of what appeared to be U.S. troops flanking a Humvee, patrolling a street.

On Monday, U.S. military officials said the details of the Fallujah attack and the Internet video did not match; they did not offer the new details until Tuesday.

This week in hometowns across the nation, families and friends mourned the Marines. In California, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger ordered flags to fly at half-staff in their memory.

E-mail Joseph Giordono at: giordonoj@mail.ezstripes.osd.mil

Col. Kane promotion announced

Col. Robert C. Kane, 86th Airlift Wing and Kaiserslautern military community commander, will be promoted to brigadier general in a ceremony Friday at Ramstein Air Base, according to an Air Force news release.

As commander of the 86th, Kane leads a wing composed of four groups, 14 squadrons and one detachment. The wing flies the C-130E, C-20H, C-21, C-37 and C-40 aircraft.

In his dual role as wing and KMC commander, he leads the largest American community outside the U.S.

As the KMC commander, he provides oversight of the support for more than 53,000 personnel living and working on five installations — Ramstein and Sembach Air Base and Vogelweh, Einsiedlerhof and Kaprun annexes, the news release stated.

From staff reports

54th Engineer Battalion takes over in Anbar



Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Deffenbaugh of the 54th Engineer Battalion and Lt. Col. Shawn McGinley, 54th commander, at a transfer of authority ceremony Friday at Camp Ramadi, Iraq. The ceremony marked the start of the battalion's responsibilities in Iraq.

Task Force 54th Engineers, deployed from Bamberg, Germany, will assume route clearance and convoy security missions throughout Anbar province, officials said.

JEREMIAH GIPSON

Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Two AF promotions announced

A top officer from the Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan has been tapped to become associate director of the Office of Central Intelligence for Military Support, the office of the Air Force chief of staff announced Wednesday.

Maj. Gen. John T. Brennan is currently the U.S. security coordinator and chief in Kabul. Also, Army Brig. Gen. Jeffrey C. Horne, deputy commander for operations, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command, has been nominated to become "effects coordinator" for Multi-National Corps-Iraq, officials said Wednesday. Horne currently serves at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo.

From staff reports